



**Nathan Deal**  
Governor

**Bobby Cagle, MSW**  
Commissioner

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**“Quality Rated” Program receives \$2.4 Million Grant from  
Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation and United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta**

*Result of Partnership between Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL),  
Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) and  
Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS)*

**ATLANTA, Ga., (May 4, 2012)** – Early education programs participating in Georgia’s new “Quality Rated” program will receive additional technical assistance, equipment and curriculum thanks to a \$2.4 million grant from the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation and the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta. The grant was recently awarded to a partnership created by Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP) and Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS).

Similar to rating systems for other service industries like restaurants and hotels, Quality Rated is a tiered quality rating and improvement system that identifies early care and education programs that meet a set of standards exceeding the state’s minimum licensing requirements. The grant will enable GaFCP to provide packages of technical assistance, equipment and curriculum to participating education programs as they achieve higher levels of quality.

“The Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation is pleased to support the combined efforts of the United Way of Metro Atlanta, GaFCP, GEEARS and DECAL to improve the quality of early education in Georgia,” said P. Russell Hardin, president of the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation.

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“We are very pleased with this partnership and honored by the Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation and its support of Quality Rated,” said Bobby Cagle, commissioner for Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. “While our department sets quality standards, evaluates programs and provides ongoing assistance to improve quality, GaFCP will provide incentive/bonus packages at each higher level of quality achieved by providers, based on DECAL evaluations. GEEARS will work with both GaFCP and DECAL to design and deliver public awareness campaigns, including the development of easily recognizable symbols of quality to be used in this statewide program.”

“Improving early care and education, and preparing Georgia’s young children for a future of learning are among our highest priorities,” said Gaye Smith, executive director of GaFCP. “We are always anxious to step in and support state-level initiatives like Georgia’s new ‘Quality Rated’ Program that have a vast impact on the population of young children.”

“Our work must begin to strengthen the connection between agencies and systems that support our children in the first 2,000 days of their lives from birth to kindergarten,” said Smith. “That’s why we’re thrilled to collaborate with DECAL and GEEARS on this program, which offers great potential.”

Mindy Binderman, executive director of GEEARS: The Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students lauded the announcement. “Through their investment in Quality Rated, The Whitehead Foundation and the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta have put a stake in the ground to show the importance of the private public partnership when it comes to ensuring that our youngest learners have the quality early beginnings they need to enter school prepared to succeed and on a path to read to learn by 3rd grade,” Binderman said.

“The QRIS system is key to improving the quality of early care and learning in Georgia. Georgia needs the Quality Rated system so parents can go to work knowing their children are being properly educated and cared for and we can all be assured our children are being prepared for our future workforce,” she added.

“I’m proud that Governor Deal cast the vision to provide the public with a childcare rating system – the first of its kind in Georgia,” said Commissioner Cagle. “We believe that Quality Rated will empower parents to make the very best childcare decision for their family. Just as every child is unique, so is every childcare center.”

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“By providing information about specific childcare centers in a transparent, user-friendly format, we are giving parents the tools to make the best choice for their individual child,” Cagle added. “This is just one way we are working to empower parents, partner with our childcare centers, and be a resource to those working with our youngest learners.”

Launched in January, 2012, more than 600 programs have voluntarily enrolled in Quality Rated in less than four months.

### **About Georgia Family Connection Partnership**

Georgia Family Connection Partnership, a public-private nonprofit organization, helps collaborative organizations collect and disseminate data; supports the network with training and technical assistance; and conveys to state and national partners all 159 counties’ priorities, practices, and challenges. We provide state agencies and policymakers with data to inform their decisions about priorities, services, and resources that have an impact on Georgia’s families. For more information go to [www.gafcp.org](http://www.gafcp.org).

### **About GEEARS**

The Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS) was established to help business, civic and government leaders maximize the economic return on the state's investments in early care and learning. Guided by a growing body of research documenting the high-dollar return on investment associated with early learning and care, GEEARS is helping Georgia become a national leader by inspiring and providing leadership for a movement that results in quality early learning and healthy development for children ages birth through five. GEEARS’ vision is, by 2020, all children in Georgia will enter kindergarten prepared to succeed and on a path to “read to learn” by third grade. For more information on GEEARS, visit <http://www.geears.org>.

### **About Bright from the Start**

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia’s children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia’s Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs. The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to [www.dec.al.gov](http://www.dec.al.gov).